

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 00322 100226Z
ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4185

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EA/J FOR KILPATRICK

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PQ
SUBJECT: PANAMA CANAL TREATIES

REF: MANSFIELD/PLATT CON 1/9

1. APPRECIATE INTEREST OF DEPARTMENT IN MONTANA STOPOVER DURING MY FEBRUARY CONSULTATIONS IN U.S., BUT UNFORTUNATELY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FIT IT INTO MY ITINERARY. HOWEVER, WILL MAKE IT A POINT TO CONTACT SENS. MELCHER AND METCALF ON THE HILL ON SUBJECT OF TREATY RATIFICATION.

2. IN REPLY TO MONTANA FRIENDS' LETTER REQUESTING MY PERSONAL VIEWS ON SAME SUBJECT, I SENT A LETTER WHICH DEPT. IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO USE AS IT SEES FIT.

3. TEXT OF LETTER:

DECEMBER 7, 1977

MR. H.G. MERRIAM
304 WESTVIEW DRIVE
MISSOULA, MONTANA

DEAR HAROLD:

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF NOVEMBER 26 WHICH I READ WITH MUCH INTEREST.

I AM GLAD THAT YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THE MEETING IN WASHINGTON OF THE COMMITTEE OF AMERICANS FOR THE CANAL TREATIES AND THAT YOU AND FRACES BOTH FAVOR THE TREATIES.

I AM IN ACCORD WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S DESIRE FOR THE TREATY TO BE APPROVED BECAUSE I THINK IT IS IN OUR VITAL INTEREST TO INSURE THE CONTINUING WORKING OF THE PANAMA CANAL. WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS DONE HAS BEEN TO BRING ABOUT A COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BEGUN UNDER PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND CARRIED FORWARD BY PRESIDENTS NIXON, FORD AND NOW CARTER. IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THE WAY TO INSURE THE OPERATION OF THE CANAL IS TO APPROVE THE TREATY DRAWN UP BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES.

IT IS MY FEELING THAT IF THE TREATY IS NOT APPROVED THAT IT COULD WELL GIVE RISE TO GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES IN PANAMA WHICH MIGHT EVEN BRING ABOUT SABOTAGE OF THE CANAL AND MAKE IT INOPERATIVE. ALSO IT COULD MEAN THE INVOLVEMENT OF OUR COUNTRY IN ANOTHER WAR TO PRESERVE A CANAL WHICH MIGHT BE DESTROYED IN THE PROCESS. IF THERE IS SABOTAGE AND THE CANAL IS DAMAGED, IT WOULD MEAN THAT IT WOULD BECOME USELESS FOR PASSAGE OF SHIPS AND WOULD CREATE A SITUATION WHICH I HAVE BEEN TOLD WOULD TAKE THREE YEARS AT LEAST TO REPAIR.

WHETHER OR NOT AS AN AMBASSADOR I SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON THIS MATTER IS OF LITTLE RELEVANCE. AS A CITIZEN I FEEL I HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPRESS MY VIEWS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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I DO FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR COUNTRY, IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE OPERATION OF THE CANAL, AND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF RELATIONS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE AS WELL AS THE WORLD TO APPROVE WHAT FOUR PRESIDENTS HAVE BEEN SEEKING AND WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER IS ENDEAVORING TO BRING TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. . . . END QUOTE (REMAINDER OF LETTER IS PERSONAL).
MANSFIELD

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NNN

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